

U.S. Representative Sanford Bishop, a longtime proponent of efforts to prohibit the physical desecration of the U.S. flag, voted for a Constitutional amendment Tuesday (6/3) that would allow Congress to restore flag protection laws-helping pass the measure in the House by a margin of 300-125.

The Senate is the next hurdle for the flag amendment, which would become the law of the land if approved by two thirds or more of the members present in houses of Congress and ratified by at least three fourths of the states.

Laws to prohibit burnings and other acts of flag desecration were declared an unconstitutional violation of free expression by the U.S. Supreme Court in a 5-4 1990 ruling. Since then, the House has approved an anti-desecration amendment several times. In the Senate, however, such an amendment has never received the necessary two-thirds support.

If the flag amendment could get through the Senate this year, Representative Bishop and a number of supporters expressed confidence that it would attract sufficient support in the states to win ratification.

The Second District Congressman said:

"Many Americans have fought and died defending the flag. By legally protecting this unique symbol, we uphold the respect and honor they are due. In the most democratic country in the world, stopping someone from burning or otherwise desecrating the flag is hardly a serious restraint on free expression. In fact, I believe we promote the cause of freedom, rather than restrict it, by protecting the symbol of service and sacrifice of every American who has defended our freedom at home and abroad against those who would destroy it."